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A VINDICATION OF CHRISTMAS-DAY; OR THE SOLEMNITY Of the Nativity of CHRIST:

Shewing the grounds upon which the Obſervation of that and other Feſtivalls is juſtified in the Church.

With a ſhort Anſwer to certain Quæries propounded by divers, in oppoſition to the aforeſaid practiſe of the Church.

By *Thomas Warmſtry*, D. D.

Unto you is born this day a Saviour, which is Chriſt the Lord, Luke 1.11.

Let us follow after things that make for peace, and things wherewith we may edifie one another, Rom. 14.19.

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The Vindication of the ſolemnity of the Nativity of Chriſt, &c.

BEfore I come to anſwer theſe Querics, that I may make way for the clearing of mens judgements, I ſhall briefely lay downe the grounds upon which the obſervation of this, and other Feſtivalls is juſtified in the Church; which are theſe.

Firſt, It is a thing not onely lawfull, but juſtly due unto God, that he ſhould be praiſed publickly and ſolemnely for this, and other ſuch like great bleſſings as he hath beſtowed upon the Church by Chriſt, and that to this end the memory of them ſhould be preſerved in the Church.

Secondly, That for theſe ends, the Obſervation of a yearely day of memoriall is a meanes conducible in it ſelfe, and approved by God in Scripture, who made uſe thereof among the ancient people to ſummon, and ſtirre them up thereby to the praiſe of God for thoſe great bleſſings and deliverances which were beſtowed upon them.

Thirdly, That the appoyntment of ſuch dayes being conducible to thoſe ends before named, which are Scripture ends, hath ſo far its ground in the word of God.

Fourthly, That the Church hath a power from God to promote thoſe ends which are commanded in his word, by all kinde of meanes which are not contrary thereunto, and ſuch a meanes is this appointment of dayes, which hath been with approbation practiſed by the Church, even in the time of the Jewiſh Bondage, in the deſignation and ordaining of Feſtivalls yearely to be obſerved,

erved, which were not enjoyned by any expresse command of God as is clearely to be seene in the institution of the Feast of Purim, *Esther.* 9 17. *&c.* and of the Feast of Dedication, *Machab.* 4 59. honoured and confirmed by the presence of our Saviour, *Joh.* 10. 2 23.

Fifthly, That this power in the Church is, though unobservedly, yet in clear consequence, is confirmed by divers arguments from the allowance and practise of Adversaries themselves.

As first, locke what power private Ministers challenge, that they must much more allow the Church: But they challenge a power to appoynt times for publick worship, which are not expressly commanded by God as upon Lecture dayes: *& go*, And there can be no reason why they should have more power to appoyns an houre or more in a day, then the Church a day or more in a yeare.

Secondly, There is as good reason that the Church should appoynt dayes of feasting, which are not commanded by God, as dayes of fasting, which are not commanded by God; since the end of the former is as acceptable to God, and more excellent then the latter, and hath no plea against it, that lyes not equally against the latter.

Thirdly, That there is much more reason that the Church should appoynt solemne dayes for praising God for Christ, and for spirituall blessings, then for temporall ones: But the latter is allowed and practised by the Parliament, as may appeare by the late Ordinance for the observation of the fifth of *November*, in memoriall of the deliverance of that very State, Church, and Religion from an outward destruction, which themselves now persecute; by the Army, in appoynting dayes of Thanksgiving for their bloody Victories over their brethren, in an impious way: Therefore the former, viz. the appoyntment of solemne dayes for greater and spirituall blessings, cannot reasonably be condemned by them.

Sixthly, This appoyntment of dayes to the purposes aforesayd, is not onely harmelesse, as not lying in opposition to any Law of God, but of excellent use and benefit to Gods people. 1. To preserve and recall the memory of these great blessings. 2. To stir up the people to the duties of praise.

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3. To call upon the Ministers in their severall charges to study, and handle those great, and necessary parts of Christian knowledge. 4. To give so many opportunities for the assembling of the people to holy duties. 5 For the rendring of those great and mysticall blessings familiar unto the people, thereby that being fulfilled in this sense, that the Psalmist speaketh in the 9. *Psal One day telleth another, and one night certifieth another; there is neither speech nor language, yet their speeches are heard among them.* Thus it comes to passe that the Calender of the Church, & the Cycle of the Festivalls presents, is as it were an easie and familiar Catechisme unto the people, and doth instruct them almost whether they will or no in the apprehensions of those high points and comfortable motions of the conception, nativity, Circumcision, Manifestation to the Gentiles, presentation in the Temple, of the death and passion, resurrection, Ascention of Christ into Heaven, and of the sending of the holy Ghost, to bring home the fruit of all; which are as so many parts of the holy Antheme of the Church the Epiphonema, or close of all which is in the Festivall of the Trinity, which is unto all the rest as the *Glory be to the Father, to the Sonne, and to the holy Ghost* &c. at the close of a Psalme, calling upon us to give honour and praise unto the Trinity for all those incomprehensible blessings and benefits whereby the worke of mans redemption is perfected and brought home unto us: This wisedome and piety of the Church is not understood, nor considered by those heavy and base brain'd people, that waigh things in the corrupt scales of of their owne contradictory and antecclesiasticall spirit; but they that are sober and peaceable discover and admire it, and blesse God for it, and do foresee with sad hearts the designes of Satan moving against this Church of ours, by the abolishing of these and and other usefull Ordinances and customes, to blot out by degrees the memory of the great and inestimable blessings of God in Christ, and to open the doore to prophanesse and infidelity: to the former benefits may be added, the mercy that doth hereby accrue unto servants, and the poore beasts in a relaxation of their labours upon such daies, those citements that they administer unto workes of charity, neighbourhood, and hospitality; things very pleasing in the sight of God, howsoever disliked by those of this age that place religion in cruelty, Faction, and Sedition

dition; and the nurcery, and ſupply that is thereby ſuggeſted unto the exerciſe of our ſpirituall joy, and delight in God, and his goodneſſe.

Laſtly, The authority of the Church both ancient and modern, both generall, and of this particular Church, comming upon us with all theſe warrants, and conveniences to ſerve the ends of God and Scripture, and ſtrengthened by the power of the civill Magiſtrate, and by the authenticall Lawes of the Kingdome in thoſe Acts of Parliament which have eſtabliſht theſe things, muſt either engage all that are within the verge of the Church, and of this Church and State eſpecially, unto a peaceable and pious obedience thereunto, or elſe leave the ſtaine of Impiety, Faction, and of a turbulent and diſorderly ſpirit, or elſe of folly and blindneſſe upon all thoſe that oppoſe it.

Indeed there is nothing free from temptations; but it is well ſaid of one, as I remember, and may be well conſidered of others, *that it is not* (at leaſt not alwaies) *the infirmity, but the excellency of things that maketh them the matter of temptation:* Abuſes of things that are good muſt teach us wiſedome and caution, but not ſet us upon confuſion.

And truly there is need of more warines in the obſervation of theſe daies then hath been uſed by many.

1. That ſuperſtition be avoided, that we think not one day in it ſelf better or more holy then another, but only ſo far as they are actually deſigned or applyed unto the ſervice of God: we muſt remember that theſe and other particular times, as places, are but circumſtances in the time of the Goſpell, the ſubſtance is in the worſhip and ſervice that is given unto God thereupon, not in the obſervation of this or that particular day, which is in it ſelfe a matter of liberty, as the Apoſtle ſheweth, *Rom.* 14. 5. *&c. Col.* 2. 16. And that may be a ſatisfactory reaſon why in the new Teſtament theſe things are not particulary, or expreſly inſoined in Scripture, becauſe theſe are but matters of Order, and of liberty; not of abſolute neceſſity, and therefore left to the moderation of the Church; but then we muſt remember that the liberty of Chriſtians is firſt the right and intereſt of the Body, and then of the Members, who muſt not urge their particular intereſt againſt publique moderations and conſtitutions in theſe things; yea, it is a maine liberty that belongs

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unto the whole body of the Church, that ſhe hath power to reſtraine the liberty of private Members by publique authority for the publique good; but Superſtition muſt be avoided, as I have ſaid; noe humane authority muſt impoſe theſe, or any ſuch like things, as ſubſtantiall, unalterable, or abſolutely neceſſary to ſalvation; but as matters of Order, as holy circumſtances, and meanes conducible unto higher ends, and ſo and no otherwiſe they are to be received and obeyed by the people: according to this is that of a late learned Father of our Church, *Non putandum plus ſanctitatis uni diei inesſe quam alteri, ſed ſciendum quod propter ordinem & præceptum Eccleſiæ alias q. cauſas ſupra memoratas uno die magis quam alio conveniamus, ad hæc exercitia ſanctitatis.*

And againe, *Non putandum, &c.* we are *not to thinke* that the *Church of God is tyed by any neceſſity to the immutable obſervation of theſe particular Feſtivall dates*: Sed ſtatuendum, *ſaith he, dies hoſce humanâ authoritate conſtitutos eâdem poſſe tolli & mutari, ſi utilitas & neceſſitas Eccleſiæ id poſtulaverit, nam omnia res per quaſcunq.: Cauſas naſcitur per eaſdem diſſolvitur: But it muſt be ſo judged, that theſe daies which are appointed by humane authority may be abolished, and altered by the ſame: where the profit and neceſſity of the Church doth require it; for all things are diſſolved by the ſame cauſes whereby they are eſtabliſhed*: But then this ought to be done upon good and true grounds, and by a power equall at leaſt to that that hath eſtabliſhed them. Bishop Davenant upon the Coloſſ. 2. v. 16.

2. There muſt be care taken that there be a prudent moderation uſed in the number of ſuch daies, that nothing be impoſed over burdenſome upon the people.

3. That they be rightly imployed, not in Superſtitious worſhiping of Saints or Angels, as is in uſe in the Church of Rome, nor yet in riot, intemperance, or any other ſinfull liberty, as hath been the practiſe of too many amongſt us, making little or no other uſe of ſuch times, but to give themſelves to idleneſſe, looſeneſſe, and vanity; an evill that hath not onely violated the holineſſe of theſe Feſtivals we ſpeak of, but alſo the Lords day, which ſome have turned into *Sabbathum Vituli aurei*, into the *Sabbath of the Golden Calfe*, of which it is ſaid, *Exod.* 32. That *The people ſate downe to eate and drinke, and roſe up to play*: Others into *Sabbathum Bovum & Aſinorum*, the *Sabbath of the Oxe and the Aſſe*, ſpending it in eating and drinking, and doing nothing; and too many make

make little or no other difference betweene that and other dayes: But onely in putting on their better clothes, and giving themselves to none, or ill worse imployment then all the rest of the weeke, as if *bene vestiri & nihil agere*, To be well attired, and to doe nothing were to celebrate the Christian Sabbath.

And indeed it cannot be denyed, but as this hath been the ill lot that too many have cast upon the Lords day, and other Festivalls: So it hath been too too much the share of the Solemnities appointed for the celebrating the birth of our Saviour, and the rest of the Festivalls that the Church hath joyned with it, which instead of being made dayes of prayse and thanksgiving to God, and of the exercise of other holy, christian, and charitable duties with that sobriety that becomes Christians, have been made dayes of riot, and gaming, and wantonnesse, and unlawfull liberty, as if men were to sacrifice to the Devill for these great and incomprehensible mercies of God: A great and intollerable abuse of such blessed opportunities, and such as (although it doth not at all justifie men in the abolition of them, but should rather have set them upon the Reformation of these miscarriages, and the restitution of such times unto the first and profitable institution of them, That these evills and corruptions being removed, the divine Solemnities, and Religious Duties might have been returned and advanced still amongst us, to the comfort of the Church, and the honour of the name of God) Yet they may justly provoke God to deprive us of the comfort of these joyfull Celebrities, which wee have so miserably abused to his dishonour, and the hurt of our selves, and of our brethren: But these being the errours of particular men, they do not blemish the constitution of the Church in these things, which intendeth not such times for such evill purposes, but for the service and honour of God, and the edification of his people. And therefore as it must be the care of all good Christians to seperate the abuses in practice: So it is their part and duty to yeeld a ready obedience unto so profitable and wholesome a constitution; and as in other Festivalls, so in this of the Nativity of Christ, &c. This being as it were the *rising of the Sunne of righteousnesse upon us with healing in his wings*, and that whereon all the succedent worke of our redemption and salvation doth depend: And therefore as this doth in an eminent and speciall manner chalenge

lenge our praiſes and ſolemne ſervices and acknowledgments unto God for ſo great a mercy: So the Authority of the Church in appoynting a ſolemne time, for ſuch ſolemne ſervice doth ſerve an holy and Scripture end, very acceptable to God, and by ſuch a meanes, which he himſelfe hath approved, and allowed the Church of God to make uſe off, and doth juſtly require our obedience thereunto, which wee cannot withdraw ordinarily, without making a breach in that Communion of Saints, which is both our comfort to enjoy, and our duty to maintaine,

And theſe grounds being thus layd, and well underſtood, I hope may ſatisfie any peaceable minded Chriſtians, and arme them againſt all materiall temptations that your Queries (which you ſeeme to thinke ſuch Giants) can offer againſt it; and therefore I might well enough perhaps ſet a period heere unto this preſent buſineſſe: But leſt you ſhould thinke your ſelfe deſpiſed, or grow wiſe in your owne conceipt, and for your further correction, and the more full ſatisfaction of others, I offer you and them this ſhort anſwer unto your Queries; and if you or any other ſhall thinke them in any thing wanting in that clearenеſſe which yours, and ſome other mens apprehenſions may perhaps require; I ſhall by Gods grace be ready if I may be allowed liberty to doe it: To render all things out of queſtion and to reſolve all doubts that may reſt behinde in a faire, calme, and Chriſtian diſputation, and diſcuſſion of the point with you or any other that ſhall in a ſober and ingenuous way deſire to enter into diſcourſe with me thereabout.

In the meane time take this briefe Reply unto your Demands.

To your firſt Quære.

Whether ſuch religious cuſtomes as are binding to all the Churches of Ieſus Chriſt, ought not to have ſure footing upon the Word of God or Apoſtolicall practice?

Anſwer, That it is ground enough for the eſtabliſhment of Cuſtomes in the Church, and to bind all Churches to the Chriſtian obſervation thereof, ſo far as is required unto Church Cuſtomes, and matters of order. *&c.* That ſuch Cuſtomes and Obſervations being in themſelves harmeleſſe, and conducible to thoſe ends which Gods

word preſcribeth, are commanded unto us by the Authority of the Church Catholick; and becauſe this Quære is ſomewhat too wide for the particular drift you aime at; give me leave to take away all doubt, to contract it a little by adding this Corolary: That in ſuch things the Authority of any particular Church is ſufficient to binde thoſe that are within the Verge of it. The Examples of the Feaſt of Purim and of Dedication before mentioned will come in ſeaſonably heere for the confirmation of this.

To your ſecond Quære.

Whether you can ſubſtantially prove that Chriſt was borne on the 25 of December? And what your proofes are?

Anſwer. That becauſe as wee have layd downe the deſignation of this or that particular day is a thing in it ſelfe indifferent (though the day being knowne wherein ſuch mercies were performed may ſeeme more convenient then another.) The maine thing that wee reſt upon being this: That God may be ſolemnely praiſed for ſo great a mercy, and to this end, that that day what ever it be, which is ſet apart by the Church for that holy purpoſe be duely obſerved: Therefore although there is perhaps more to be ſayd heerin then you are aware of; yet to make ſhort worke, and that they may be the eaſilier ſatisfied, who are not able to examine Antiquities: I anſwer that it is not at all neceſſary for us to prove ſubſtantially that Chriſt was borne upon the 25 of *December*; it is ſufficient for us that the Authority of the Church hath appoynted that day to performe the duty of praiſe therefore unto God, neither doe wee ſo much depend upon that day, but if upon good reaſon an equall Authority had deſigned any other, it might be indifferent to us; ſo that God may have his honour in the ſolemnization of his great mercies, whether in this moneth, or that moneth. on this day, or that day, is of ſmall concernment. but in poynt of order peace. uniformity, and obedience; to dote upon this or that day otherwiſe were ſuperſtitious.

To your third Quære.

Whether the celebration of that day (grant he was borne on it)

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can be clearely warranted by you from Scripture? And what your Scriptures are?

Answer, It is answered already in the Reply made to the two former, where you have beene shewed, that it is neither necessary to be proved that Christ was borne upon that day, nor yet that there needes any particular Scripture warrant for the observation of such dayes, more then is expressed in the answer to the first, and the grounds that are layd before you, and so much as hath been shewed wee have abundantly for this day. *Viz.* That the Church hath power to appoynt a day for so holy and excellent an end prescribed in Scripture, and warranted unto us by the practice of a Quire of Angells, of *Simeon* and *Anna*, *Zachary* and *Elizabeth*, in the Divine Story.

To your fourth Quære.

Whether you can cleare it by sound consequence from the New Testament, though not set downe there in totidem verbis?

Answer, That which hath been sayd may suffice, in that the celebration of this day is appoynted by sufficient Authority, for those ends which are commanded in the New Testament, as is the rendring praise to God for so great a blessing of the New Testament, and is a meanes allowed by God for such purpose, and conducible thereunto, as hath been shewed in the grounds.

To the fifth Quære.

Whether you can doe it by universall tradition?

Answer, That it is well knowne that the observation of this day hath been very Ancient, and doth appeare to be of universall reception; as (if leasure and opportunity would permit) might be manifested more abundantly, but for the present it may suffice to set down that notable testimony of St. *Cyprian*, a very Ancient Father, in his booke *de Nativitate Christi in initio*. *Adest* (saith he, speaking of this Festivall of the Nativity of Christ) *Christi multum desiderata & dia*

dim expectata Nativitas, adest Solemnitas inclita, & in præsentia salvatoris, gratel, & laudes, Visitatori suo per orbem terrarum Sancta reddit Ecclesia. There is now present the much desired, and long expected Nativity of Christ; now is present that famous Solemnity or Festivall, and the holy Church throughout all the World doth render thankes and praises to her visiter in the presence of our Saviour; and though it be sufficient to binde us; that so wholesome custome is enjoyned by Authenticall Authority in this Church and Nation; yet this and other testimonies that might be brought of the Antiquity and universality thereof, doe much strengthen the obligation that lyes upon us, for the Religious observation thereof.

To your fixt Quære.

Whether (in case it can be evidenced by one of these, viz plaine Text, solid Inference, universall Tradition) it be not a meere humane invention, and so Will worship? And how you will one day acquit yourselves before God, for placing, and crying up mens Inventions, instead of the institutions of Iesus Christ? And whether it were not faithfull dealing with poore simple people to tell them that you have neither of these to warrant it?

I answer, it is already avoyded, and needeth no further Reply but this; first, that you have been taught if you can learne that wee have inference enough to satisfie men that will be content with evidence, and wish you would attempt nothing in the Church, but what you could please half so much for: Secondly, that the observation of these particular dayes is not enjoyned by the Church, or used by us, as any substantiall part of worship, but as a circumstance of worship, and so can be no will-worship, no more then your appoynting this or that particular houre for preaching, and prayer upon a Lecture day, or the appoynting of dayes of thanksgiving for Victories, for temporall deliverances, or of Publique Fasts by humane Authority (which as to the designation of the particular times are unquestionably of humane invention) are therefore to be accounted will-worship; unlesse you will have the will-worship to lye in this; that these dayes wee speake of are appoynted by good and full Authority, and that Christ

Chriſt is remembred therein; and now I intreate you to conſider how you will one day acquit your ſelfe before God, for ſlandering and crying downe the wholeſome orders and conſtitutions of the Church, to bring in diviſion, confuſion, and prophanation; and whether it were not faithfull dealing with thoſe poore ſimple people, that you or others have ſeduced into ſeditious and factious courſes, and murmurings againſt Government and Order, to tell them that you underſtood not things your ſelves, nor have taught them in the wayes of peace and righteouſneſſe, as you ſhould have done.

To your ſeaventh Q. &c.

(Since dayes and times commanded by God himſelfe to be obſerved under the Law, were, and are unlawfull under the Goſpel) Whether dayes and times commanded by men, and not by God, under the Goſpell, are not leſſe lawfull.

Anſ. Thoſe daies and times that were commanded by God himſelfe to be obſerved under the Law, were appointed by him for that time, as types and figures of the things of Chriſt, as Saint *Paul* will inſtruct you *Coloſſ.* 2. 16. 17. and in regard of that typicall uſe, and the Legall neceſſity thereof are vaniſhed at the comming of Chriſt, which is the body and ſubſtance of thoſe ſhaddowes; and therefore though they be ſo far become unlawfull, it will by no meanes infer that therefore thoſe daies and times which are commanded by men with ſufficient warrant from God under the Goſpell as conducible meanes unto Goſpell-ends, and for the ſolemnizing of the glory of God for Goſpell bleſſings, ſhould be concluded unlawfull, ſince the aforeſaid reaſon of the abolition of thoſe things of the Law, is no way appliable unto the Feſtivals, or other wholſome conſtitutions in the time of the Goſpell, which are neither injoyned as types, nor as things neceſſary to ſalvation, but as matters of order, and circumſtantiall meanes for the promotion of other ſubſtantiall duties, not oppoſing, but aſſerting and magnifying the great bleſſings that God hath revealed, and imparted unto us in, and by, the Meſſias now come. But for your further inſtruction, I deſire you to take notice, that in the Feaſts of the Jewes, as there was ſomething Ceremoniall, ſo there

was ſomething Morrall: that they were of unalterable neceſſity reſtrained to ſuch and ſuch particular times, that they were to be celebrated with ſuch and ſuch particular Ceremonies, and were therein types and figures of the things of Chriſt, and the time of the Goſpell, and that by the indiſpencible obligation of the divine præcept; in theſe and ſuch like conſiderations, they were Ceremoniall and temporary, belonging unto that Sate of the Jewiſh Church; But if they be conſidered as they were certaine ſolemne and convenient times ſet apart for the publique worſhip of God, and for the more ſolemne teſtification of their thankfulneſſe unto him, for thoſe great bleſſings and deliverances that they received from him; This was, as a learned Authour tells us, *morale, & naturale, & cum cæteris omnibus gentibus commune*, it was *morall* and *naturall*, and *common with them vnto other nations*. Now though that which is typicall and ceremoniall be aboliſhed as a ſhadow by the comming of the ſubſtance, yet that which is morall and naturall remayneth; it is ſtill not only lawfull, but pious for the Jewes to ſet apart ſome times to prayſe God for their deliverance out of Ægypt, and for thoſe other bleſſings which that Church received from him. and ſo that the typicall and properly legall uſe, together with the indiſpenſable neceſſity of thoſe particular times and ceremonies be caſt away, it were no impiety in them, as matters of order, to make uſe of ſome or more of the ſame times which they formerly obſerved for this morall purpoſe. Yea we find St Paul Acts 18. 21, and 20. 16. reſolving and indeavouring to keepe one of thoſe Jewiſh feaſts at Jeruſalem, long after the aſcenſion of Chriſt and the abolition of the ceremoniall part of the Jewiſh Law, and to take advantage of that ſolemnity to glorifie God amongſt them. And if all this will not ſave you from a wonder, I intreat you to conſider that the effect of the abolition of the Ceremoniall Law, was the taking away of the legall neceſſity and the typicall uſe of them, not the rendering of the matter of thoſe Ceremonies unlawfull; and for your better ſatisfaction in this point, I refer you to a Treatiſe of mine lately ſet forth, called, *The ſighs of the Church and Common Wealth of England*, pag. 312. 313. &c. where I hope you will find this matter abundantly cleared. And now the foundation of your ſeventh Quære being thus ſearched and found to be of ſo ſandy a conſtitution, we need not trouble our ſelves any more about the Quære it ſelfe: but to tell you in the words of a Reverend Divine, *Quicquid nonnulli contrà afferre ſolent*

Devin. in Coloſſ. 2. 16.

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piè & prudenter proſpectum eſt ab Antiquis patribus, ut anniverſariè in Eccleſia celebrarentur ingentia illa beneficia incarnationis filii Dei, paſſionis, reſurrectionis, aſcenſionis, miſſionis Spiritus Sancti, quorum omnium memoriam ſolennitatibus conſtitutis conſecramus, ne volumine temporum ingrata ſurreperet nobis oblivio, ut loquitur Aug. de Civit. Dei lib. 10. c. 4. *Whatſoever ſome are wont to bring to the contrary, it was pioufly and prudently provided of the ancient Fathers, That there ſhould be anniverſary or yearely celebrations of thoſe great benefits, of the incarnation of the ſonne of God, of his paſſion, reſurrection, aſcenſion, and of the ſending of the Holy Ghoſt; the memorialls of all which, we conſecrate by appointed ſolemnities, leſt, as S. Aug. ſpeaketh, by the courſe of the times an unthankfull forgetfulnes therof ſhould ſteale upon us.* And the ſame learned Authour will ſhew you that we are invited heerunto by the obligation of gratitude that we owe unto God, as publique benefits are to be publiquely acknowledged, and to be celebrated with publique thankſgiving: which cannot commodiouſly be done, unleſſe they that have the rule of the Church and Common wealth, doe appoint ſet dayes for the people to come together to that purpoſe Joel. 2. 15.

That we are incouraged heereunto by the peoples benefit which they may reape heereby in being upon ſuch occaſions made acquainted with the chiefe myſteries of ſalvation, which whether they ſhalbe inſtructed in, or no, is a matter of too great concernment, to be left to the diſcretion of every private Miniſter; and therefore the Church hath thought fit to call upon them for it by theſe Feſtivals. And I pray God the attempts of the abolition of theſe memorialls, be not the drifts of ſome ſecret plot of Sathan, to make way for the ſtealing of Chriſtianity out of this Nation: if we conſider the motions of ſome other engines of his, together with this in theſe times, I doubt wee may find but too much cauſe to ſuſpect it, and cauſe enough for all good people to deſire to prevent it, by being unwilling to part with any the leaſt lawfull meanes, that may ſerve to keep up the memory and impreſſions of Chriſt, and his wonderfull mercies in our hearts.

He will ſhew you alſo, as I have done, how this practiſe is confirmed unto us by the examples of the godly people in the Scripture, who have appointed ſet and yearly dayes for ſuch purpoſes, beſides thoſe that were commanded expreſly and particularly by God himſelfe. And I can adde that the ſame is yet further confirmed unto us, by the judgement and practice of holy men in the Chriſtian Church, not only of the Ancients, but of many famous moderne Proteſtant Divines.

vines. As *Melanthon*, *Hemingius*, *Scultetus*, &c. all which being put into the ſame ſcale with the Authority of the Church of England, and the Law, which hath yet found no Authority equall unto it, to diſſolve the Acts thereof in this kinde, will I doubt not weigh downe all the ſeeming reaſons or divinity upon which you have grounded your Quæries.

To your eighth Quære.

Whether the true and genuine Interpretation of Chriſtmas *be* Chriſt man? *And whether to perſwade people 'tis ſo, be not to abuſe and delude them? And whether we may not as well interpret* Candlemas Candleman, Michaelmas Michaelman, *as* Chriſtmas Chriſtman?

Anſwer, That this is a queſtion ſo childiſh of ſo vaine importance, and ſo of no concernement at all to the buſineſſe propounded: That I might be excuſed if I ſhould ſay no more, but either to wiſh you more wiſdome and ſobriety in the things of God and his Church, or if you know any that is guilty of making ſo fooliſh a deſcant upon that name of *Chriſtmas* as your Quære preſents, to leave you to him for a Reply; neither the Church of England nor I are bound to juſtifie the follies of particular men: But leaſt your inſinuated quarrell at the name of *Chriſtmas*, ſhould meete with any ſuch weake judgements, as to produce any ſcruple (premiſing this, that theſe are things that neither the Church of England, nor I conceive any diſcreet childe thereof will ſtand upon any further then they ſerve to make us underſtand one another, and I wiſh all quarrels about names were ſo at an end amongſt us, I ſay yet further, that the interpretation of learned Biſhop *Andrews* might have beene better thought on by you, then that fond one you have mentioned, reducing Chriſtmas to *Chriſti miſſa*, and taking *miſſa* for *miſſio*; ſo that it may preſent the importance of the Feaſt *Viz.* The ſending of Chriſt into the world, or if this be liable to ſome exception; yet it cannot be denyed but the word Maſſe, however it hath been corrupted in latter times, is from *miſſa*, and I believe you may finde that the word *miſſa* hath been of good uſe in the Church, and derived from a good and laudable cuſtome of

of diſmiſſing the *Catechumeni* before the Communion in the Primitive times, and may import as much as the Office, or Communion of the faithfull, and then Chriſts-maſſe may ſound as much as the Office or Communion of the faithfull upon Chriſts day, or in the praiſe of Chriſt, or in memoriall of him; or if you are loath to admit of this in juſtification of the word *miſſa*, I intreate you yet to allow thus much: That however evill the word is in the uſe of the Church of Rome, yet ſince you know it hath no ſuch evill importance in the ſenſe of the Church of England (and it is not unlawfull to reforme the abuſe of words as well as things) there can be no harme in the uſe of that title for diſtinction, no more then it was for St. *Luke* in the 17. of the Acts v. 22. to comply ſo far with cuſtome as to call the ſtreet in Athens by the name of *Mars* his ſtreet, although *Mars* were an Heathen Idol, or to call *Dionyſius* by the title of the *Areopagite*, v. 34. I adviſe you therefore to take the Counſell of St. *Paul* hereafter, for your owne good and the quiet of others, and the Church, that inſtead of being ſuch a one as he condemneth, 1. *Tim.* 6.4.5. ſick of a ſpirituall tympany, and νοσῶν περὶ ζητήσεις καὶ λογομαχίας, ἐξ ὧν γίνεται φθόνος, ἔρις, βλασφημίαι, ὑπόνοιαι πονηραὶ, διαπαρατριβαὶ διεφθαρμένων ἀνθρώπων τὸν νοῦν, καὶ ἀπεστερημένων τῆς ἀληθείας, *doating or madding about queſtions and ſtrife of words, whereof commeth envy, ſtrife, railings, evill ſurmiſings, froward diſputations of men of corrupt mindes, and deſtitute of the truth*; you would become ſuch as he adviſeth, 2. Tim. 14. 23. *That you ſtrive not about words, which is to no profit, but to the perverting of the hearers*; and that you would *put away fooliſh and unlearned queſtions, knowing that they engender ſtrife.*

To your ninth Quære.

Whether the Saints are bound to rejoyce in the Birth of Chriſt on that day men ſuperſtitiouſly call Chriſtmas, *more then at other times? And whether the Lords day be not* [*the*]*-day appoynted for them to rejoyce on?*

Anſ. Leaving your imputation that you lay of ſuperſtition upon the name of *Chriſtmas* to the correction of that which hath been already ſayd unto the Quære next before. I anſwer, that though Chriſtians

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are bound at all times to rejoyce in the birth of Chriſt, which is ſufficient to condemne the boldneſſe of thoſe that forbid men upon any time or day to do it by that rule of the Apoſtle, *Philipp.* 4. 4. Rejoice in the Lord alway, and againe I ſay rejoyce; yet to helpe our infirmities, and to ſtir up our backwardneſſe, and to make for the greater cheerfulneſſe and ſolemnity of this joy, the Church hath done well and pioufly to appoint ſome ſpeciall times to call us together to rejoyce in the great mercies of God, and in that regard it is more eſpecially required of all her Children to do it at ſuch times then at other times, and the fault is the greater to omit it then, in as much as to the neglect of the univerſall duty is added the ſinne of diſobedience againſt the wholeſome orders of the Church, and a diviſion therein of our ſelves from the Body, and a denyall of that concurrence and aſſiſtance that wee ought to give in the communion and fellowſhip of Gods people in thoſe things which are publickly performed for the celebration of the praiſe and worſhip of God, and for the advancement of divine comforts in the Congregations. And though it be true that the Lords day is a day wherein they ought to rejoyce, which yet as to the particular day, is but an holy circumſtance, and a matter of order, though eſtabliſhed by great Authority, notwithſtanding it is not (the) day in ſuch a ſence, as your parentheſis would perhaps inſinuate, as to exclude all other dayes from the buſineſſe of ſolemne rejoycing in Gods mercies; for how then will the fifth of *November*, and the dayes of Thankſgiving, that have beene of late appoynted, be juſtified? and therefore your queſtion makes nothing againſt our concluſion; for though that day be to be obſerved for a day of joy in God, it doth not forbid others to be ſo employed.

To the tenth Quere.

Whether Chriſtmas *day ought in any reſpect to be eſteemed above another of the Weeke dayes? And whether people may not without offence to God follow their lawfull vocations on that day?*

Anſwer, In it ſelfe no day is neceſſarily to be eſteemed better then another; for as the Apoſtle tells us, *he that eſteemeth all dayes alike doth it*

it to the Lord. But in the uſe of it, as a matter of order, and as it is dedicated by a lawfull power in the Church, in a more eſpeciall manner then the reſt, in reſpect of obedience, order, and compliance with thoſe ſacred ends for which they are ſo deſigned, Chriſtmas day, and other Feſtivalls of the Church ought to be eſteemed above another day: For it is the duty of Chriſtians to comply with one another, and to obey Authority in thoſe things that are profitable and conducible to holy and good purpoſes: And therefore it will follow, that without neceſſity, for people to depart from this Rule, and to doe it with contempt of Authority, and to the diſcouragement and hinderance of ſuch holy ends and duties, by following their ordinary vocations which are lawfull at other times, is a breach of good order, a violation of unity, an hinderance to piety, and the holy Solemnity of ſuch times, as well as to doe it upon a day of Faſting or Humiliation, inſtituted by humane Authority: and cannot be ſo done without an offence to God.

To your eleaventh Quæ.e.

Whether you thinke the Parliament and Aſſembly have erred and played the fooles in condemning and raiſing out Holy dayes not warranted in the Word? And whether to obſerve them, be not highly to diſlike and flatly to contradict (in point of practice at leaſt) their proceedings in order to a Reformation?

Anſwer, I doubt not to ſay that they have erred in divers reſpects: Firſt, in making unneceſſary changes in the Church, which ought not to be done, but upon urgent cauſes; but doth diſcover in them that doe it a love unto change, which the wiſe man condemneth, *Prov.* 24. 21. and is ordinarily of evill conſequence to the Church, as wee finde by too lamentable experience; for whilſt the people like thoſe that are ſick of a Feaver have thought good *mutationibus pro remediis uti*, to take ſuch kinde of changes for medicines, their remedies have proved their greateſt diſeaſes; and now wee ſee how ſick they are grown of their Phyſitians, and how ſick the Phyſitians are of their owne adminiſtrations: Secondly, they have erred in going about to aboliſh ſo harmleſſe and uſefull a meanes of the promoting of Gods glory,

and of the edification of the people: Thirdly, in undertaking to diſſolve ſo laudable cuſtomes, and ſo univerſally and anciently received, and eſtabliſhed by full power of the State and Church, either without any Authority thereunto or by a power inferiour unto that, whereby they were conſtituted: Fourthly, in doing thoſe things without any admiſſion of thoſe that are contrary minded to be heard, or any faire diſcuſſion or debate of thoſe differences that are in mens judgements thereabout: and therefore their proceedings therein are, and may be juſtly diſliked and contradicted both by declaration and practice, without lying open to any ſuch charge as you mention of oppoſing proceedings in order to Reformation, properly ſo called; ſuch undertakings with the reſt that are like them, being rather in order to a deformation. But whether in this they have playd the fooles, or no, I leave that to you to determine.

To your twelfth Quere.

Whether (ſince moſt men and women in England *doe blindely and ſuperſtitiouſly beleeve Chriſt was borne that day) preaching on it, doth not nouriſh and ſtrengthen them in that beliefe?*

Anſw. Although it be admitted to be a matter of ſome uncertainty whether our Saviour were borne upon that day, or no, yet (it being not materiall unto the lawfulneſſe and wholſomneſſe of the obſervation of the ſolemnity, as hath beene declared) if it bee an error in the people to apprehend ſo, yet it is an harmeleſſe one, and without the danger of ſuperſtition, which yet Preaching upon that day doeth neyther neceſſarily nouriſh nor ſtrengthen in them. I ſhall not deny but there hath beene ſome difference in Antiquity concerning the very day upon which Chriſt was borne; but *Hoſpinian*, who was no friend unto the Church in theſe things, confeſſeth, That from the moſt ancient times, it was celebrated on the 25. of *December*; which hee prooveth out of *Theophylus*, a very ancient Biſhop of *Cæſarea Paleſtina*, who lived about the time of *Commodus* and *Severus* the Emperours. The Arguments that are brought againſt the reception of this day, for the very day of our Saviours Birth, from the impoſition of the Taxe of the Romane Emperour, and from the ſhepheards watching of their ſheepe

sheepe by night, are not at all concludent, but of weake importance, to overthrow so ancient and received an opinion in the Church: Though that time might be lesse convenient for people to travell into their owne Countries, as was required in that imposition of *Augustus*, yet it is no strange thing in Magistrates, and those both prudent and pious, to passe through such small and private inconveniences for the obtaining supplies of publique necessities; it would be a very weake argument, if any should heereafter undertake to prove this unhappy Parliament began not in *November*, because that Moneth is usually none of the best seasons to travell from the severall parts of this Kingdome to *London* in. And though sheepe are tender creatures, yet that season is not of the same bitternesse in all Climates, and if I mistake not, as tender as they are, they are even in this Northerne and cold Climate folded sometimes without dores in the winter: if the difference about this point be such that no certaine resolution can bee found, it is lawfull for the Church to make choice of such a day for the purpose of this solemnity, as appeares most convenient. And what day more convenient, then that which as it is confessed to have beene most anciently received, so is commended too by the universality of the practise and consent at least of all the Westerne Churches therein? and if God be served and praysed by us in such holy and solemne maner as is due for so great a mercy, upon that day which the Church hath injoyned, it will be, no doubt, as acceptable to God, as if it were done upon some other day of your choyce, whether it be the very day of Christs birth or no: and I hope you doe thinke it fit, that some day or other may bee imployed in so good a businesse. The onely question then will remaine, whether the Church and Magistrate, or you bee fitter to choose, which is not worth the discussing.

To the thirteenth Quære.

Whether this Feast *had not its rise and growth from Christians conformity to the mad Feasts* Saturnalia (*kept in* December *to* Saturne *the Father of Gods*) *in which there was a Sheafe offered to* Ceres *Goddesse of Corne; a hymne in her praise called* ἕλοι *or* ἴελος? *And whether those Christians by name, to cloake*

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it, did not afterwards call it Yule ; *and* Chriſtmas *(as though it were for Chriſts honour ?) And whether it be not yet by ſome (more ancient then truely or knowingly religious) called* Yule, *and the mad playes (wherewith 'tis celebrated like thoſe* Saturnalia) Yule *games ? And whether from the offering of that Sheafe to* Ceres ; *from that ſong in her praiſe ; from thoſe gifts the Heathens gave their friends in the Calends of* January, ominis gratia. *did not ariſe or ſpring our blazes ;* Chriſtma. *Kartles, and* New yeares *gifts ?*

Anſw. That the originall and growth of ſo pious and holy a practiſe in the Chriſtian Church, ſhould be allowed no other root but a ſuppoſed conformity of Chriſtians to the madde feaſts of *Saturnalia*, when there are ſo many better and clearer fountaines to derive this from, in the order that it hath unto Scripture end and duties, to Goſpel and Chriſtian performances, and in the warrant that it hath from Scripture examples in like matters, is an argument of ſome want of charity in thoſe that goe about to infect men with ſuch perſwaſions. Charity engageth us to judge the beſt even of the actions of private men, much more of the publike conſtitutions and obſervations of the Church ; what ever abuſes have beene brought in by wicked and looſe men to corrupt and deprave theſe wholeſome ordinances, (which we approve not nor will undertake to juſtifie) There is no conformity nor compliance at all, betweene the holy aymes and intentions of the Church of God, in the appointment of this or other feſtivalls, and the franticke, looſe, and impious manage of the *Saturnalia* among the Heathens. Theſe are appointed by the Church to bee dayes of piety and ſobriety, of prayſe unto God for his great mercies, of ſpirituall joy in his divine comforts and holy delights in our Chriſtian ſocieties, of hoſpitality and mutuall offices of Chriſtian love one to another, which are the true and proper employments of holy feſtivalls, commended and warranted unto us by the word of God. If any practiſes have crept in (as there have too many) to the depravation of theſe times, and diſappointment of thoſe ends for which they were inſtituted, by riot and looſenes or ſuch rude cariages and demeanours which may be too truly ſorted with the Heathenish *Saturnalia*, they have been anciently reproved, as *Hoſpinian* will informe you by that which hee hath

hath cited out of that famous Oration of *Gregory Nazianzen* upon the Nativity of Christ: And he will tell you a Story too if you will beleeve it of one *Otbernus* and some others to the number of 15. who being reproved by *Rupertus* a Priest for prophaning that night of our Lords Nativity, by light and lascivious dancing and singing, and required from him, *ut ab hujusmodi levitate in nocte tam sancta desisterent: That they would desist from such levity in so holy a night*, when they would not yeeld unto this wholesome advice, But persisted in the vaine exercises they were about, upon the prayer of *Rupertus* that they might continue dancing so all the yeare long, They did so continue night and day for the space of a whole yeare: and he cites *Trithemius in chron. Hirsaug.* for the Authour of this Story; which if it be true doth not at all oppose, but confirme these constitutions of the Church, as the judgements of God sent upon those that are the prophaners of the Lords day, are brought to justifie the observation thereof; it doth indeede disallow the abuses thereof, which as they were anciently condemned, so wee condemne them still, being contrary as to the righteous commands of God, so to the wholesome institutions of the Church: I earnestly exhort all Christians carefully to avoyd all such courses and miscarriges, and to sanctifie this and other such like Festivalls unto God in holy and Christian duties as they ought, and the Church enjoynes, lest they answer the contrary dearely unto God, as well for the enormity of their vitious carriages, as for the prophanation and scandall that they thereby bring upon these profitable Orders of the Church, and their sacrilegious robbing of God of such times which are consecrated to his Divine Worship, That they may employ them in the service of the Devill: But in the meane time I cannot but wonder at the strange dispensations of these times, wherein for ought appeares, there is more strictnes used against the preaching of the word of God, and holy exercises upon these dayes, then against any of the foresayd abuses and miscariages. Wee have heard of the persecution and imprisonment of Ministers for attempting to preach the Word of God, upon the festivall of Christs Nativity, and of strict and forcible prohibition thereof; but whether there hath beene halfe so much strictnesse against riot, or lightnesse, or vanity, at such times, let it be considered; and surely such dealing is no good character

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of a Reformation. They that do ſo, winnow not with Gods ſieve, but the Divels, ſhaking out the wheat, and retayning the chaffe; they are no good Phyſitians, that purge out the good and wholeſome humours, and leave thoſe that are corrupt and diſtempered behind, nor is this the way to procure health unto the body. In the name of God if they meane to reforme, as they talke, let them diſtinguiſh betweene good and evill, betweene healthfull and profitable inſtitutions, and pernicious and abuſive depravations, and let thoſe be removed, and thoſe eſtabliſhed: if it doth appeare that the time of this Feſtivall doth comply with the time of the Heathens *Saturnalia*, This leaves no charge of impiety upon it; for ſince things are beſt cured by their contraries: It was both wiſedome and piety in the ancient Chriſtians, (whoſe work it was to convert the Heathens from ſuch as well as other ſuperſtitions and miſcarriages) To vindicate ſuch times from that ſervice of the Devill, by appoynting them to the more ſolemne and eſpeciall ſervice of God and to recall people from that practiſe of wickedneſſe by calling them unto the practiſe of true holineſſe thereupon. As for that you adde about your *Yule* games, it is not materiall, after that which hath beene ſayd, and therefore for brevity ſake I paſſe it over. The Blazes are fooliſh and vaine, and not countenanced by the Church. Chriſtmaſſe Karoles if they be ſuch as are fit for the time, and of holy and ſober compoſures, and uſed with Chriſtian ſobriety and piety, they are not unlawfull, and may be profitable, if they be ſung with grace in the heart. New yeares gifts, if performed without ſuperſtition (and you muſt have ground ere you may charge them with it) may be harmles provocations to Chriſtian love, and mutuall teſtimonies thereof to good purpoſe, and never the worſe, becauſe the Heathens have them at the like times. The Heathens uſe to eate at noone, and ſo doe wee; if it be harmeleſſe to joyne with them in houres deſigned for acts of nature; why not in dayes deſigned by us for acts of love and mutuall affection; if thoſe dayes and their practice thereupon be tainted with ſuperſtition, it will not follow that ours muſt needes be ſo, or is it not lawfull for us to employ thoſe dayes well, becauſe they doe ill? But this is no Religious but a Civill matter, and therefore not requiſite to ſtand much upon it; no great matter whether that cuſtome be held up or no, and yet there is no need

in ſuch times as theſe to diſcourage and forbid acts of love and mutuall kindeneſſe. This Age is not ſick of any ſuperfluities in this kinde in the generall, and therefore no great neede of phyſick for ſuch diſeaſes: Trouble not your ſelfe therefore any more about this matter; if you diſlike New-yeares gifts, I would adviſe your Pariſhioners not to trouble your conſcience with them, and all will be well.

To your fourteenth Quere.

Whether conformity to and retention of Heathenish Customes be commendable in Christians, ſuitable or agreeable with Goſpel Principles, though under pretext of Chriſts Honour and Worſhippe?

Anſwer, You ſeeme to me to be ignorant, and have taken up opinions at too eaſie a rate; give me leave therefore to informe you a little: All Cuſtomes are not Heatheniſh that are obſerved among Heathens; it is a cuſtome with Heathens to kneele at prayer, yet this is no Heatheniſh cuſtome; it is a cuſtome with Heathens to inſtitute publique Faſts, and dayes of Humiliation in times of danger and calamity will you ſay therefore that Chriſtians are Heatheniſh, or comply with Heatheniſh cuſtomes in doing the like? Or if wee may joyne with them in appoynting dayes of faſting, why not as well in appoynting dayes of feaſting, as long as wee joyne not with them in ſuperſtition about either? Wee muſt not deny Chriſt becauſe the Devills confeſſed him. It is no good Chriſtianity in the people of this Age to hate their brethren, becauſe the Publicans are friendly unto theirs, *Math.* 5. 47. Wee are not ſure bound to prophane all times that the Heathens have ſuperſtitiouſly conſecrated: if wee are, I doubt you will ſcarce have halfe an houre in the day or night left you for your devotions: Wee may joyne with Heathens or any in thoſe things, that are good and wholeſom. Heatheniſh cuſtomes cannot be good, but many cuſtomes of Heathens may: They have learnt, it is probable many practiſes of Religion from

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the people of God, and have corrupted the Coppies that they have taken from the Originalls, it is not necessary therefore for Gods people to cast away the Originalls which are pure and good. Heathenish customes are such as stand opposite to the doctrine of Christ and the Gospel: The Religious observation of these Festivalls makes for both; to appoynt and observe a day holyly and religiously for the solemne praise of God for Christ, and Gospel mercies, cannot be sayd to be against Christ or the Gospel; since the former is honoured, and the latter preached and published by this meanes: This therefore is no Heathenish custome; take you heed of complying with an Heathenish designe of abolishing the memory of Christ and Christianity from amongst us, it is a danger worthy of a double caution, it is not a pretext of Christs honour, But the truth thereof that justifies these dayes, and is the proper and holy businesse of them; wee desire not to march under such colours, but leave them rather to those that under pretext of Religion are busie to overthrow all Religion amongst us: I neede not tell you who they are, but wish you take heede of them.

To your fifteenth Quære.

Whether you are not bound to prove your practice for the conviction and satisfaction of your Brethren, whose duty it is to walke with you in things agreeable to the minde of Christ? And in case you cannot; Whether you ought not to acknowledge your errour, lay downe your practice (as others have done theirs) no longer befooling and misleading the people committed to your charge?

Answer, I have sayd thus much for your conviction and satisfaction, and wish it may worke so well with you, that as it is your duty, so it may be your practice to walke with us in things agreeable to the minde of Christ; and therefore I hope wee are sufficiently discharged from any necessity of confessing any errour in these

theſe things, and that it doth by this time appeare that there is much more neede of reforming yours, and of laying downe your practice as others have done theirs, no longer befooling nor misleading the people committed unto your Charge; that you may from hence forth teach them the wayes of peace and righteouſnes.

To your ſixteenth Quære.

Whether in caſe you returne no Anſwer to theſe Quæries, I have not ground ſufficient to conclude you utterly unable to give any rationall account of your practice now put upon it?

Anſwer, Sir, you have an Anſwer to your Quæries, and therefore have no ground left you ſufficient to conclude us unable to give any rationall account of our practice, which I wiſh you may receive with a Chriſtian minde, that you and others may reape the fruit thereof: Let your Study be Unity, for that is the way to felicity.

The God of peace and holyneſſe direct you and us all into the wayes of peace and holyneſſe, that wee may no longer foſter diviſions and ſtrife amongſt us, to the joy of our adverſaries, and the reproach of the Goſpel; but that following the truth in love, wee may in all things grow up into him, which is the head, even Chriſt.

Now for all the paines I have taken to anſwer your Quæries, I ſhall deſire you to anſwer but one of mine, *viz.*

Whether you think doth ſavour of moſt piety and good will unto Chriſt and his honour, to forbid the preaching of Gods word, and the celebration of the praiſe of God for his great mercies upon the 25 *of* December, *or upon any other day, or to enjoyne it? Or whether it becomes Chriſtians to prohibit the worke of God at any time?*

An

An addition of some testimonies out of Antiquity concerning this Festivall.

Theophaniam hoc nostrum festum nominamus, in quo mundi salutarem concelebramus diem Domini natalem, Basil. in Serm. de humanâ Christi generatione.

Festum est omnium Festorum maximè venerandum, quod si quis appellet omnium Festorum Metropolim, haud quaquam aberret, Chrysostomus in Oratione pro Philogonio.

Γενέθλια τοῦ σωτῆρος *natales servatoris & σπιφανίας adventum seu apparitionem vocat.* Nazianz.

Natalem Domini sicut & pascha, & pentecostim majora solemnia vocat, Beda. lib. 5. c. 19.

The Antiquity of this Feast is so great, that *Hospinian* confesseth, *Quando & a quo hoc Festum institutum sit certo sciri non potest*: So that for ought he or any can say against it, it may have its institution even from the Apostles themselves.

The same Authour acknowledgeth the mention of it to have been very Ancient in the Church, by *Theophilus* Bishop of *Cæsarea Palæstina*, who lived about the time of *Commodus* and *Severus*.

And he sheweth how afterwards in the time of *Maximinus* this Festivall was glorified by the Martyrdome of divers Christians at *Nicomedia*, who were there burnt together with the Church wherein they were celebrating this holy day, see *Nicephorus, lib. 7. cap. 6.* and wee have good reason to believe these Martyrs were as good Christians as some that would sequester the holynesse of Feasts, Churches, and all other men upon earth, scarcely sparing the Saints in Heaven, that they may arrogate the Title of holynes and saintship onely to themselves.

FINIS.